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## **Industrialization, Female Labour Migration, and the Changing Pattern of Malay Women's Labour Force Participation**

—An Analysis of Interrelationship and Implications—\*

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### **Introduction**

Since the 1960s, in some Asian countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hongkong, women workers constitute a significant proportion of the manufacturing sector's labour force. A similar trend is occurring after 1970 in other Asian countries such as the Philippines and Malaysia. Many of these women workers are employed by multinational companies; in fact, the sudden expansion in employment opportunities for women often coincides with the establishment of multinational-owned electronics, garment, and other light consumer-oriented industries. This pattern of rapidly increasing women's participation in the manufacturing sector's labour force is closely related to export-oriented labour-intensive industrialization. Generally these

export-oriented industries are situated in urban-based locations frequently known as Free Trade Zones and Industrial Estates.<sup>1)</sup> The creation of job-opportunities has often

- 1) The 'Free Trade Zone' is similar to an industrial estate where land, factory buildings, electric power, industrial water and other infrastructure elements are furnished by the host governments for the convenience of manufacturing firms operating there. But there are significant features which differentiate a 'Free Trade Zone' from the ordinary 'Industrial Estate.' Some of these features are as follows: (a) the 'Free Trade Zone' is an alien territory within a national territory. It is cut off by barbed wire or concrete walls from the rest of the country. It is a foreign enclave in terms of customs—territorial aspects such as total or partial exemption from law and decrees of the country concerned; (b) within 'Free Trade Zone' areas, manufacturers (usually foreign investors) are given special incentives which are not accorded to manufacturers in industrial estates. These include freedom from customs duties on imported production means and equipment, raw materials and components. Also, preferential treatment is given on capital and income taxes, repatriation of profits, cost of utilities, etc. In the latter half of the 1960s, a number of countries in East Asia began to establish FTZ in their territories, the first being Taiwan's Kaohsiung Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) set up in 1965. In 1970 Taiwan established two other zones, Taichung Export Processing Zone and Nantze Export Processing Zone. In the same year South Korea set up the Masan Free Export Zone. In 1972, the Philippines' government set up the Bataan Export Processing Zone and Malaysia established the Bayan Lepas Free Trade Zone.

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caused a concomitant rapid rise in female migration streams starting from the rural hinterland and flowing into the factory gates.

This paper will focus on the situation in Malaysia where, since the early 1970s, there has been an upsurge of female labour migration to urban-industrial areas where multinationals-owned industries are found. Specifically, the paper has the following objectives: first, to observe the pattern of economic forces of demand for female workers in the manufacturing sector of Malaysia and its relationship with the growth of multinational industrial companies in Malaysia. Second, to look at the impact of these economic forces of demand for female labour on the structural composition of the manufacturing sector's labour force as well as the trend of Malay female labour migration from the rural to the urban areas. Third, to examine the broad ramifications of the present exodus of Malay female labour migration. Fourth, to identify the major implications of the changing trends and patterns of female labour migration in the context of specific governmental socio-economic development objectives and strategies.

The paper is divided into four sections. Section one provides a brief overview of the salient factors which explain the coming of the multinational-owned electronics, garment, textile and other light consumer-oriented industries to Asia in general and Malaysia in particular. It outlines the major reasons responsible for the sudden expansion in employment opportunities for women.

Section two investigates the factors relating to the rapid upsurge of Malay female rural-urban migration to the urban-based industrial factories in Peninsular Malaysia and states the broad ramifications of this current phenomenon.

Section three elaborates on two major aspects of these ramifications and the relationship between them. These aspects are firstly, the changing trend of Malay female rural-urban migration and secondly, the changing pattern of Malay women's participation in the labour force over the years 1957 and 1977.

Section four examines these changing trends and patterns in the context of specific governmental socio-economic development objectives and strategies and briefly states the broad implications of these changes.

## **I The Coming of the Multinationals and Demand Factors for Female Labour**

Currently in the economically developed countries there exists a common economic phenomenon; the prices of consumer goods like electronics items, garments, electronic toys have declined substantially and thus become relatively cheap. Most of these products are manufactured in factories owned by multinational corporations. Their plants are located in the relatively less developed countries like Hongkong, South Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia.

One reason why these multinational corporations select these countries as their off-shore sourcing areas is the availability

of cheap and docile female labour. In other words when compared to female workers in the economically developed countries, the female workers here are cheaper to hire and easier to control. For example, the experience of the electronics industry of the United States of America, showed that the 1960s was a decade troubled by rising labour costs. Consequently, in their efforts to secure cheap and good workers these electronic companies transferred their operations initially to the southern parts of America, then to Latin America (Mexico and Brazil) and subsequently to the countries of East Asia and Southeast Asia.<sup>2)</sup>

An investigation into the employment strategies of these multinational-owned electronics, garments and food-processing companies in Asia revealed two significant findings. First, they prefer to employ more women workers than men workers. This deliberate policy of recruiting women workers is closely related to the nature of these industries. For example, the electronics industry requires workers who can perform intricate work with diligence, patience and speed, and in this sphere, women always prove to be better than men workers. Second, these multinational-owned establishments have the most-advanced and sophisticated personnel-management methods when compared to locally-owned establishments. They always try to outdo the local industrial companies in terms of recruiting workers by offering higher wages and various job-incentives in the form of fringe-benefits and better

physical working environment.<sup>3)</sup>

Since 1970, many multinational corporations have established their factories in Malaysia. Amongst the industries which employ a majority of women workers, the electronics industry tops the list in terms of the rate of growth of factories and number of female employees. For example in 1970 there were 41 electronics firms employing 3,200 workers (99% of their workers were women). In 1976 this number has rapidly increased to 138 firms with a total of 47,000 workers [16]. In terms of the proportion of women to men workers, the records show that in 1976 about 90% of the garment workers and 57% of textile workers are women. In general it can be said that the multinational-owned establishments belonging to electronics, textile and garment industries are the biggest employer of female labour in the manufacturing sector of the Malaysian economy.<sup>4)</sup>

The impressive rate of growth in the number of these multinational-owned establishments is in part a result of the very favoured treatment accorded by the Malaysian government to export oriented industries in general and to multinationals in the electronics industry in particular. Since 1970, the Malaysian government has embarked on an expensive and ambitious programme of inviting foreign investors to establish export-oriented, labour-intensive industries in Malaysia. Besides many general incentives (like the establishment of export-processing trade zones and pioneer status treatment) the Malaysian government

2) For details, see South-East Asia Chronicle [21].

3) For details, see Jamilah, Ariffin [7].

4) See Jamilah, Ariffin [7].

has also ensured an industrial environment conducive to foreign investors. Second, legislative measures which serve to promote the interests of foreign investors have either been relaxed or conversely enforced depending on the situation. For example on the one hand, legislative regulations prohibiting night-shift work for women workers have been relaxed. On the other hand, investors' explicit wish and concerted action to block the formation of workers' trade unions' have not met active opposition from the government.<sup>5)</sup> In fact, at the present time there are deliberate moves by the government to curb the rights of trade unions in Malaysia and ensure a docile and efficient industrial work-force (Some examples of these moves are the Amendments to the Trade Union Ordinance and Industrial Relations Act which were passed in Parliament in April 1980 and the Amendments to the Labour Enactment Laws of 1973 which were tabled in Parliament in June 1980). Since 1970, the Malaysian government has sent several trade missions abroad which publicized the 'fast-fingured' Malaysian female workers who are efficient in performing work in the electronics and garment industries. Within the country, manufacturing firms are allowed to send their recruiting agents to the countryside and encourage rural girls to migrate and work in the urban-based factories. One example of the government's role in obtaining labour for the factories is in the early 1970s when the women section of UMNO helped in recruiting women from the east coast states of Peninsular Malaysia to work in Penang

free trade zones.

## **II Supply Factors and Female Rural-urban Labour Migration to Modern Industrial Factories**

A notable feature of the Malaysian industrialization pattern is that most manufacturing industries are located in urbanized areas. Figures from the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority (M.I.D.A.) indicate that in 1976, about 79% of the manufacturing industries are located in the developed west-coast states of Malaysia, namely Selangor, Penang, Johor and Perak. This urban-based location of industries has prompted a steady flow of labour migration from the rural areas to urban areas since the Malaysian population is still predominantly rural-based. In 1970, by strata about 73% of the population in Malaysia was located in rural areas.<sup>6)</sup>

Despite the government's efforts in encouraging the dispersal of Industries (for example by giving locational incentives) most industrial companies especially those dealing with the production of garments and electronics, prefer to locate their factories in urban areas where they are assured of better infrastructural facilities. Most electronics factories are located in the free trade zones which are very near the cities on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia and most garment factories are found in the urban areas. This feature can be known by looking at all the addresses of electronics and garment factories as listed in the directory compiled by M.I.D.A.

5) For details, see Jamilah, Ariffin [7].

6) For details, see Jamilah, Ariffin [4].

Since the implementation of the new industrial policy which encouraged labour-intensive, export-oriented industries in 1970, and with the establishment of electronics, garments, textiles, and food-processing factories in Malaysia, the manufacturing sector has recorded a dramatic growth rate and this is

especially in terms of the number of female workers employed. Figures in Table 1 show the proportion of female workers relative to male workers in the manufacturing sector over the years 1957 to 1976. These figures are indicative of the rapid increase in women's labour force participation and the formation of a significant category of workers, namely the female industrial workers. This is so when we compare it with the relative decline in the percentage of male factory workers.

Prior to 1970, the structure of the manufacturing sector's showed two distinct features; first, in terms of male-female composition there were more men than women workers (See figures in Table 1). Second in terms of ethnic composition, workers from the Chinese ethnic group formed the majority, the Malay formed the second largest group and the Indians the third largest group (See figures in Table 1). In view of the ethnic composition of the Malaysian society, where Malays account for more than 55% of the total, Chinese about 34% and Indians about 10%, the structural composition of factory workers

**Table 1** Employed Males and Females by Race in the Manufacturing Sector of Peninsular Malaysia (1957-1976)

Year	Total	Total Male	Total Female	Malay Total	Chinese Total	Indian Total	Others Total
1957	100%	83.3%	16.7%	19.6%	72.0%	7.5%	0.9%
1970	100%	71.0%	29.0%	29.0%	65.3%	5.3%	0.5%
1974	100%	62.9%	37.1%	32.9%	59.7%	6.3%	0.6%
1975	100%	60.8%	39.3%	33.6%	59.2%	6.5%	0.8%
1976	100%	58.7%	41.3%	36.1%	56.3%	7.0%	0.6%

Note: These figures are calculated by the author based on unpublished data obtained from the Statistics Department of Malaysia in October 1979.

prior to 1970 clearly reflected a distinctive racial imbalance in favour of the Chinese ethnic group.<sup>7)</sup>

Since 1970, the Malaysian government has embarked on its New Economic Policy. Among other things it categorically implied that the intake of workers should reflect the racial composition of the Malaysian society. This particular employment policy is directed especially to industrial companies which are just starting their production and to established firms which are planning to expand their interests. In keeping with this policy, at least 30% of industrial firms' workforce composition should comprise Malay workers. Since its implementation, reports on the composition of the labour force of manufacturing industries showed that more than 50% of their unskilled workers are Malays and in the case of firms employing a majority of female workers, most of them are Malay girls.

The participation rate of Malay female workers in the manufacturing sector is growing rapidly. In 1957 they comprised

7) For details, see Prime Minister Department [14].

only about 7% of the manufacturing sectors' labour force, in 1976 they formed about 19% of the labour force. In relation to female workers of other ethnic groups, the Malay female factory worker as a category has the highest growth rate and they will probably form the majority of female factory workers in the future (See Table 2).

It is to be noted that the majority of Malay female factory workers are rural-urban migrants. For example according to the latest information obtained by the writer, it is estimated that in March 1980, there are 14,000 electronics workers in Subang-Sungai Way Free Trade Zone, 90% or 12,600

of these workers are females of which 70% or 8,820 are Malay girls who are mainly migrants from the rural areas. To provide another example, in Penang where the Bayan Lepas Free Trade Zone is located, the Malays constitute 31% of the local population. With the introduction of the employment policy, there is an apparent shortage of young local Malay female labour and the majority of female factory girls are rural-urban migrants from outside Penang. The labour force participation rate of Malay female rural-urban migrants in the manufacturing sector is very significant. In 1970 it can be estimated that there were not more than 1,000 Malay female

rural-urban migrants in the manufacturing sector's labour force. By 1978 according to the authors' calculations, this number has increased to over 80,000.

The rapid upsurge of Malay female labour migration from the rural areas to the urban-based manufacturing industries is not surprising considering that in 1970 about 85% of all Malays were residents of rural areas of which more than half are Malay females.<sup>8)</sup>

**Table 2** Employed Females by Race in the Manufacturing Sector of Peninsular Malaysia (1957-1976) and Yearly Rate of Increase of Malay Female Workers

Year	Total	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Others
1957	22,545	8,889	13,448	149	59
1970	73,058	27,949	43,739	1,193	177
Yearly Rate of Increase (1957-1970)		(16%)	(17.3%)		
1974	184,728	79,699	96,498	8,174	357
Yearly Rate of Increase (1970-1974)		(46.28%)	(30.15%)		
1975	209,427	91,929	106,249	10,915	334
Yearly Rate of Increase (1974-1975)		(15.3%)	(10.1%)		
1976	241,514	109,771	119,532	11,590	621
Yearly Rate of Increase (1975-1976)		(19.4%)	(12.5%)		

Source: Statistics Department of Malaysia.

Note: These figures are calculated by the author based on unpublished data obtained from the source stated above.

8) For details, see Jamilah, Ariffin [6].

### III Ramifications of Malay Female Labour Migration to Urban-based Manufacturing Industries

The broad ramifications of this exodus of Malay female labour migration are numerous and wide-ranging. Some of them affect Malay cultural traditions and norms concerning female migration and women's participation in industrial development; the demography of the Malay community in urban-industrial areas; the impact of the factory culture and its implications for Malaysian society. These ramifications are of significant importance to the Malaysian public. Since some of these issues have been discussed by the author in other papers,<sup>9)</sup> we will, in this paper, concentrate on two major issues. These issues are as follows: firstly, we examine the impact of Malay female labour migration on the trend and pattern of Malaysian female labour migration in general and Malay female rural-urban migration in particular; secondly, we study the relationship between the rapid outflow of Malay female labour from rural areas to the urban-based factories, and the changing pattern of Malay women's labour force participation in the Malaysian economy.

#### III (i) *Changing Trends and Patterns of Female Labour Migration to Urban-based Factories*

The establishment of multinational-owned manufacturing industries in

Malaysia and the implementation of the New Economic Policy have brought about a significant expansion in employment opportunities for the single and relatively educated Malay females. These economic conditions have also prompted the rural-urban migration of Malay female labour in proportions which have never been experienced in the Malaysian economy. The rapid participation rates of young single Malay female migrant workers in the manufacturing sector occur in the midst of significant changes. Among others, these changes are firstly; the ethnic and structural composition of rural-urban migrants in the manufacturing sectors' labour force; and secondly, the trend and pattern of Malay female rural-urban migration. Some salient features of these changes are discussed below:

Firstly, prior to 1970, there were more Chinese female rural-urban migrants in the manufacturing sector's labour force than Malay female rural-urban migrants. Estimates made from the data of the 1970 census indicate that about 1,750 Chinese and only 700 Malay female rural-urban migrants were employed in the manufacturing sector in 1970. Similarly, there were more Malay male rural-urban migrants than Malay female rural-urban migrants in the manufacturing sector's labour force. Today this pattern can be expected to be different with the increasing participation rates of Malay female migrant workers in the Manufacturing sector.

Secondly, the continuous demand for Malay female workers by the urban-based manufacturing industries<sup>10)</sup> and the exodus

9) See the Seminar and Conference papers cited earlier. These issues and policy recommendations are discussed in greater detail in a recent paper. See Jamilah, Ariffin [8].



of single Malay women workers from rural areas create some significant changes in the trend and pattern of Malay female rural-urban migration. Prior to 1970, the autonomous migration of single Malay women workers was an uncommon practice in Malay while autonomous migration of young single Malay men is a practice encouraged by Malay cultural norms and values (in line with the tradition of 'merantau'). Malay society frowned upon the intentions of young and single Malay females to migrate independently.<sup>11)</sup> Today it is the trend for young village girls to migrate on their own and become factory workers in urban areas. Whether this autonomous migration is frowned upon by Malay society or conversely encouraged by the sending village communities is an area which is presently researched into by the author.<sup>12)</sup>

Thirdly, prior to 1970, most Malay

village women were married at the time of migration and they migrated with their families. The single Malay village girls who migrated autonomously and with the intention of getting employment (usually as domestic servants) lived with other families once they arrived in the urban areas. Today the trend is changing, not only do Malay girls migrate autonomously but they also live independently with other factory girls in the cities.<sup>13)</sup>

III (ii) *Malay Female Migration to Urban-based Factories and the Changing Structure of Malay Women's Labour Force Participation in the Malaysian Economy*

The current trend of Malay female rural-urban labour migration can be gauged not only through field-observations but also from survey statistical data on Malay Women's Labour Force Participation in the economy. The precise aim of the ensuing discussion is to show that changes in the structure of Malay Women's Labour Force Participation for the period 1957 and 1977 reflect this movement of Malay female labour from the rural sector to the urban-industrial sector.

Before proceeding to this exercise, it may be useful to provide some brief background information on the changing pattern of Malaysian women's labour force participation in general and Malay women's labour force participation in particular.

- 10) In the early part of the 1970s the minimum educational requirement set by manufacturing Companies for positions as female production operators in the electronics, garment, and textile industries was middle-level secondary education. Now with the continuous and ever-expanding demand for female workers, the minimum educational requirement has been lowered to 6th grade primary educational qualifications.
- 11) Traditional Malay society's opinion on female migration is discussed by Ronald Provencher [19].
- 12) A pilot study to gauge the opinion of Malay society's opinion on the status of factory girls was launched in October 1979. About 2,000 rural villagers (representing about 40 traditional Malay villages) were interviewed and an opinion-survey on residents in three urban-industrial areas (Sungai-Way, Shah Alam and Selayang Baru) is being conducted.

- 13) The implication of this new pattern of residential arrangements has been discussed in the authors' paper. See Jamilah, Ariffin [6].

Recent studies on the Malaysian women's participation in the labour force indicate the following findings: the trend of Malaysian women's labour force participation in the economic development process seems to follow a u-shaped pattern. This implies that women's participation rates first fall and then rise during the more advanced stages of the development process. The initial drop in the pattern reflects the decline in women's participation rates in agricultural work while the incline in the latter part of the pattern, occurs because of increasing participation rates in the modern sector.<sup>14)</sup>

From a cursory analysis, conducted by the author, of survey statistical data on Malay women's labour force participation for the period 1957 and 1977 it seems that the trend of Malay women's labour force participation follows the general u-shaped pattern as discussed above.

Data from labour force surveys carried out by the Statistics Department of Malaysia over the years 1957 and 1977 indicates that Malay women's participation in the traditional agricultural sector is decreasing. Simultaneously, Malay women's participa-

**Table 3** Percentage of Employed Malay Females by Industry (1957-1977)

Industry	1957	1970	1974	1975	1976	1977
1. Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting and Fishing	54.4	38.6	33.6	32.97	28.1	26.1
2. Agricultural Products Substantially Processed	32.5	32.1	30.3	29.5	31.3	31.2
Total Agriculture	86.9	70.7	63.9	62.47	59.4	57.3
3. Mining and Quarrying	0.1	0.1	0.23	0.1	0.04	0.07
4. Manufacturing	3.5	6.0	13.0	14.22	16.71	16.4
5. Construction	0.0	0.0	0.07	0.09	0.22	0.24
6. Electricity, Gas, Water and Sanitary Services	0.0	0.1	0.14	0.07	0.04	0.15
7. Commerce	3.0	3.5	7.20	7.21	7.20	6.96
8. Transport, Storage and Communication	0.1	0.3	0.55	0.62	0.64	0.66
9. Services	5.6	10.0	14.9	15.21	15.64	18.13
10. Industry not Adequately Described	0.7	9.3	0.006	—	0.01	0.42
Total Experienced Labour Force	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: These figures are calculated by the author based on unpublished data obtained from the Statistics Department of Malaysia.

tion rates in the manufacturing sector and service sectors are increasing significantly. Figures in Table 3 indicate this changing pattern of Malay women's labour force participation in the economy for the period 1957 and 1977.

A closer examination of data pertaining to the changing trend of Malay women's labour force participation reveals a clearer picture of Malay female labour migration. The relevant findings are listed below:<sup>15)</sup>

First, even though Malay women's as an ethnic group still forms the majority of female workers in the traditional agricultural sector, their participation rates are steadily declining over the years, especially

14) Some example are: (a) Hirschman, C. and Aghajanian, A. [3]; (b) Lau, Lee Peng [11].

15) For details, see Lau, Lee Peng [11].

since 1970.

Second, in the non-agricultural sector, the most rapid expansion in Malay women's employment appears to be present in the manufacturing sector. The next important sector is the service sector.

Third, the number of Malay female agricultural workers belonging to the category classified as 'unpaid family workers' is steadily decreasing over the years. A sizeable number of these workers are young, single females.

Fourth, an analysis of the median age of Malay female workers in the manufacturing sector shows it is around 23 years old, indicating that Malay female factory workers belong to the younger age-group.

On the basis of those findings and viewed in the present context where the majority of Malay females are essentially rural-based residents while the location of 'female-dominated' manufacturing industries are urban-based, it can be concluded that the statistical findings do reflect a net movement of Malay female labour from the traditional agricultural sector to the urban-industrial sector. This conclusion is supported by the findings of a survey carried out by the author on Malay female rural-urban migrant workers in the manufacturing industries which indicate that many of the girls were school-leavers who were, at

one time or other, employed as unpaid family helpers in the traditional agricultural sector.<sup>16)</sup>

#### **IV Rural-urban Exodus of Malay Females: A Facet of the Dilemma of Development**

Throughout the course of the year, 1979, a number of seminars were held in Malaysia which discussed the theme of rural-urban migration. One of these seminars was entitled "A Dilemma of Development: The Rural-Urban Migration."<sup>17)</sup> The deliberations of these seminars tended to stress the gloomy consequences of rural-urban migration such as the serious labour shortage in the agricultural sector, the increasing problem of squatter settlements in the cities, rising crime rates and drug-addiction among young rural-urban migrants. A common conclusion and general agreement reached among seminar participants (which consisted mainly of prominent government officials, public figures, politicians and selected academicians) were that the flow of rural-urban migration of village youths should be prevented or redirected to less urbanized areas. One such means was to 'bring the bright lights to the rural villages.' This was identified as a strategy which could counteract a major pull-factor

16) The survey had three major objectives: first, to explore the causes of rural-urban migration of Malay women to the metropolitan urban-industrial centres of Peninsular Malaysia; second, to trace the adaptation process of migrants to work and life in the urban environment, and third, to gauge the changes in outlook and values of these migrants in terms of a traditional-modern continuum.

17) This was a seminar organized by the Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation (CAYC) in Kuala Lumpur. For details, see *NST* [18]. Among those who presented papers and stressed the undesirable consequences of migration were the Director General of the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Manpower Planning Unit, and the Chief Researcher of the Ministry of Social Welfare.

of rural-urban migration, namely, the attraction of the bright lights and life in the cities.<sup>18)</sup>

It therefore came as a shock to many people when the Minister of Home Affairs made a press statement that rural-urban migration should not be regarded as a dilemma of development. Rather, it is a phenomenon which is actively encouraged by the government and in line with the overall plan of restructuring Malaysian society. Particularly, the migration of Malays from the rural areas (which are inhabited predominantly by Malays) to city areas (where most Non-Malays are found) will bring about a more balanced representation of ethnic groups in city areas. Rural-urban migration of people from the impoverished rural sector to the relatively more wealthy urban sector will enable rural-urban migrants to participate and share the growing prosperity in the urban areas.<sup>19)</sup>

The public statement of the Minister

raised several queries among the Malaysian public, one of which was whether it represented the official stand of the government. To date, no official statement has been issued. Nevertheless, in the author's opinion, the statement of the Minister of Home Affairs did provide a succinct explanation for certain policies and strategies of the government. With particular reference to the current phenomenon of Malay female rural-urban migration to urban-based factories, a few relevant observations can be made. Firstly, in the initial stages of industrialization, there have been some attempts by the members of the ruling party to stem the tide of female migration to the factories. However, now, despite several reports on the moral decadence of factory girls and the exploitation of women workers, such attempts seemed to have lost its strength. Instead, politicians belonging to the ruling party are finding ways to satisfy the demand of industrial companies for female labour and accommodate the needs of the thousands of factory girls in the cities.<sup>20)</sup>

18) This strategy was introduced by the Director General of the Socio-Economic Research Unit, Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia. Details of this strategy were elaborated in an article on the front page of the *Malay Mail* [13]: "SOCIAL SCIENTIST ON WAYS OF STEMMING URBAN DRIFT. It might be necessary to take the city lights to the rural door step, in a manner of speaking, to keep youths from migrating to town..."

19) Details of the Minister of Home Affairs' opinion were outlined in *NST* [17]: "Rural Youth Migration is 'part of nation's strategy' Kuala Lumpur, Monday—The Home Affairs Minister described the present rural-urban drift migration of youth in most Asean countries as a 'logical and necessary prerequisite of Asean future development' and not a negative phenomena as theoreticians make this out to be..." Further elaborations on this matter were given in the Malay Language newspapers.

20) In the mid-1970s, many local politicians including the Minister for Social Welfare, urged rural villagers not to allow their daughters to migrate and work in modern factories because of the moral decadence prevailing in some urban-industrial areas. Some politicians blamed the factory girls for the socio-economic problems they were encountering in the urban areas. Nowadays, the trend is to sympathize with the woes of the factory girls and to encourage factory girls to participate in activities organized by the women's section of UMNO. Policies and programmes for providing housing for factory girls, recreational activities, etc. are being actively organized by the Minister of Social Welfare and women politicians in Malaysia.

Secondly, Malay female migration to the cities may be perceived by the government as a means of attaining the objective of urbanizing the Malay community in the following way: in the urban areas there are more Malay males than Malay females. In the past Malay village males who migrated to the cities tended to return to the villages to marry and settle down. Now by allowing the migration of single, young Malay females to the cities, there is a high possibility that rural-urban migrant Malays will meet and settle down permanently in the cities.<sup>21)</sup> In this way, the objective of ensuring a greater proportion of Malays in the composition of the urban population is achieved.

Thirdly, the continuous influx of Malay females to the urban-industrial areas aids in the attainment of the objectives of rapid industrialization of the Malaysian economy. Given the reluctance of many manufacturing companies to set up their factories in the rural areas, (as discussed earlier) and remained biased in favour of urban locations, the voluntary migration of Malay females to urban-based factories caters to the economic demands of industrial companies and ensures the success of government policies of encouraging labour-intensive, export-oriented industrialization.

To summarize, the exodus of Malay female migration to urban-based factories fulfils the objectives and strategies of the

Malaysian government in two ways. One, by providing the labour for the export-oriented, labour-intensive industries and two, by assisting the process of permanent settlement of Malays in city areas.

### Summary and Conclusion

In this paper an attempt is made to explain the present trend of increasing female labour force participation in the manufacturing sector of Malaysia and its relationship with the rapid upsurge of female labour migration to multinational-owned industries. Specifically, the paper analysed the impact and implications of this trend with particular reference to Malay female rural-urban migration.

On the basis of this analysis, the following conclusions are derived:

First, the coming of multinational industrial companies to Malaysia and the establishment of export-oriented, labour-intensive industries have created a sudden expansion in employment opportunities for the single, young and relatively educated women. Women workers are participating in industrial development as providers of cheap and docile labour. Over the years, since 1970, they are forming a sizeable majority in the manufacturing sectors' labour force. The rapid increase in employment opportunities in the manufacturing industries has prompted an exodus of female labour migration from rural areas to the urban-based factories.

Second, the continual demand for female labour has caused a considerable impact on the pattern and trend of female migration.

21) The findings of a follow-up study conducted by the author in 1979 on a selected group of the sample of 1977 seem to indicate that many factory girls meet and marry men in the urban-industrial areas. Many express the intention to settle permanently in the cities.

One common feature is the autonomous migration of young, single female workers. The implementation of the New Economic Policy as regards employment and management policies of industrial companies has created strong pull factors for Malay female rural-urban labour migration. This in turn creates several changes in the trend and structure of Malay women's labour force participation in the economy. In particular there is a net movement of Malay female labour from the traditional agricultural sector to the urban-industrial sector.

Third, the rapid influx of young and single Malay females into the cities should not be viewed as a facet of a 'dilemma of development' especially when it is examined within the context of the Malaysian government objectives of restructuring Malaysian society. Given the twin goals of rapid industrialization and urbanization of the Malay community in Malaysia, the rapid upsurge of Malay female migration from the rural to the urban-industrial areas assists the attainment of these goals, and it is in line with the socio-economic development strategies of the Malaysian government.

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